

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 6636

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IR, SHUM
SUBJ: GOI BOOSTS FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

REF: TEHRAN A-124

1. A FURTHER DEMONSTRATION OF CURRENT GOI CAMPAIGN TO PERMIT GREATER FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IS JULY 25 PUBLIC STATEMENT OF HUSHANG ANSARY, MINISTER OF ECONOMICS AND FINANCE AND LEADER OF THE CONSTRUCTIVE WING OF THE RASTAKHIZ PARTY. INTERVIEW RECEIVED WIDESPREAD TEHRAN PRESS COVERAGE WHICH EMPHASIZED ANSARY'S REMARKS ON FREEDOM OF THE PRESS.

2. ANSARY SAID THAT FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION WERE "AMONG THE INDISPUTABLE RIGHTS" OF THE IRANIAN PEOPLE. HE ADDED THAT WITHOUT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND IDEAS, HOW CAN WE EXPECT THOUGHTS TO BLOSSOM AND THE BEST POLICY ALTERNATIVES TO EMERGE?" THE PRESS SHOULD ENJOY COMPLETE FREEDOM TO DISCUSS DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND IT SHOULD
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PUBLICIZE THE HAZARDS OF EXTRAVAGANCE AND EDUCATED PEOPLE TO BECOME MORE JUDICIOUS IN THEIR EXPENDITURES, ACCORDING TO ANSARY.

3. IN A RINGING ENDORSEMENT OF A NATIONAL DIALOGUE ANSARY SAID, "PENS SHOULD WRITE AND TONGUES SHOULD SPEAK SO THAT THIS CLASH OF IDEAS SHOULD LIGHT OUR PATH TOWARDS THE

IDEAS OF THE REVOLUTION". THESE IDEALS "WHICH RESPOND TO OUR NEEDS OF TODAY AND TOMORROW" INCLUDE THE MONARCHY, THE CONSTITUTION AND THE WHITE REVOLUTION, HE ADDED. ESCHEWING FOREIGN "ISMS" ANSARY SAID NEITHER CAPITALISM NOR COMMUNISM COULD DEAL ADEQUATELY WITH THE PROBLEMS FACING CONTEMPORARY IRAN. SPECIFICALLY, HE SAID THAT THE WESTERN DEMOCRACIES OPERATED THROUGH PRESSURE GROUPS WHICH GIVE RISE TO DANGEROUS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS. SUCH DANGERS WOULD NOT ARISE IN IRAN, ANSARY NOTED, BECAUSE THE INDIGENOUS IRANIAN SYSTEM DID NOT ALLOW FOR THE PRESENCE OF EITHER PRESSURE GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS WITH VESTED INTERESTS. IN THE LONGER TERM ANSARY OPINED THAT, "GRADUALLY, AS THE PEOPLE'S POLITICAL MATURITY AND FORESIGHT INCREASES, SO ALSO WILL THEIR SCOPE FOR POLITICAL ACTIVITIES". HE SAID THAT CRITICISM WAS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF SOCIAL LIFE IN THE RASTAKHIZ ERA. TO ENSURE THAT NO MISUNDERSTANDING REGARDING HIS INTERPRETATION OF CRITICISM AROSE HE EXPLAINED, "BY CRITICISM I MEAN THE REGULAR FLOW OF CORRECT INFORMATION THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY WITH THE AIM OF ESTABLISHING DEMOCRATIC VALUES AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES APACE WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY".

4. COMMENT: ANSARY'S INTERVIEW CLOSELY FOLLOWS TWO SPEECHES GIVEN WITHIN THE PAST THREE WEEKS BY PRIME MINISTER HOVEYDA IN W HE PROCLAIMED THAT EVERY IRANIAN HAS THE RIGHT TO CRITICIZE AND DIFFER IN ALL NATIONAL AFFAIRS EXCEPT WHERE
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"THE ESSENCE OF IRAN'S NATIONHOOD IS CONCERNED". THE EXCEPTIONS INCLUDE THE UNTOUCHABLE TRINITY: MONARCH, CONSTITUTION AND WHITE REVOLUTION. ANSARY'S REMARKS DO NOT STRAY FROM HOVEYDA'S EARLIER PRONOUNCEMENTS BUT CONTINUE THE PRESENT CAMPAIGN OF INVITING "CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM" WITHIN WELL DEFINED BOUNDARIES. THIS RECENT ACTIVITY BY GOVERNMENT LEADERS IS A REFLECTION OF AN INCREASINGLY TOLERATE OFFICIAL ATTITUDE WHICH HAS DEVELOPED OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS TOWARD CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT. (REFAIR, POUCHES ADDRESSEE POSTS, PROVIDES MORE COMPLETE ACCOUNT OF CURRENT STIRRINGS OF DISSENT IN IRAN.)
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